DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 642 HE 033 651

AUTHOR	Wolford, Karen; Clemo, Lorrie
TITLE	Collaborative and Experiential Learning in a Human Diversity Course.
PUB DATE	1997-03-00
NOTE	15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology (11th, Ellenville, NY, March 19-21, 1997).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Behavior Patterns; *College Students; *Cooperation; Cultural Awareness; *Diversity (Student); *Experiential Learning; Higher Education; *Multicultural Education; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

A series of collaborative and experiential activities was designed to provide learning opportunities for students enrolled in an interdisciplinary human diversity course. Students were required to participate in a group project and were given class time to work with the group designing the presentations. Students were also asked to participate in ongoing research on multicultural experience. Pretest and posttest measures of the impact of this method of instruction on attitudinal and behavior change related to a student's openness to exploring diversity activities were administered as a measure of the effectiveness of this type of instruction. Data were for 66 students from 1993, when the course was an elective, and for 75 students in 1997, when the course was a requirement. A hypothesis based on the Social Construct Hypothesis stated that positive contact with others who are different would reduce prejudice. The 1993 sample experienced significant change in the direction of increasing multicultural experience participation. Several possible explanations for the differences between the samples are discussed. Appendixes contain the questionnaire, presentation guidelines for the course, and the group assessment form. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 448 642

Collaborative and Experiential Learning in a Human Diversity Course

Karen Wolford, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor Psychology
SUNY College at Oswego
Oswego, New York 13126

Lorrie Clemo, Ph.D.
Associate Professor Political Science
SUNY College at Oswego
Oswego, New York 13126

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. R. Levine
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology
(Ellenville, New York, March 19-21, 1997)

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ms. Jessie Pierre in the data collection and scoring of the project.

HE030951

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Collaborative and Experiential Learning in a Human Diversity Course

Large classroom instruction with a diverse student population has posed a challenge to university faculty. This project involved the development of a series of collaborative and experiential learning opportunities for students who were enrolled in an interdisciplinary human diversity course. Pre and post-test measures of the impact of this method of instruction on attitudinal and behavior change related to student's openness to exploring diversity activities were administered as a measure of the effectiveness of this type of instruction. A specific hypothesis was that based on the Social Contact Hypothesis which states positive contact with others who are different from us will reduce prejudice

Collaborative and Experiential Learning in a Human Diversity Course

In recent years numerous articles have been published that describe activities for increasing student involvement with subject matter (Baird, 1991; Chrisler, 1990, Goldstein, 1993; Hall, 1995, Johnson and Johnson, 1990, Jolley, 1990; Riding and Powell, 1993; & Dettmer, 1986). Some of this research has to varying degrees investigated the contexts, processes and outcomes of collaborative learning. Baird (1991) and Goldstein (1993) conclude that collaborative modes of learning result in improved critical thinking and analysis of subject matter, clearer communication of information and ideas, and increased confidence in students, particularly those that tend to be passive. It has also been demonstrated that students involved in the learning process through the use of collaborative strategies gain more from the college experience, and that involvement with faculty and other students makes an overwhelming difference in student retention and success in college (Smith and MacGregor, 1992, Dunn and Toedter, 1991).

Adopting collaborative learning modes in large, diverse classroom settings has posed a particular challenge to university faculty who have traditionally been the sole source of knowledge in large group instructional settings (Tinto, Russo, and Kadel, 1994).

This article presents a detailed description of how both collaborative and experiential instruction was applied to a large section undergraduate course on human diversity.

The human diversity course was titled, "Race and Gender in United States Society: Political and Psychological Considerations" and was designed to examine the complex interplay of how individual psychological concerns about diversity are often mirrored in our political directives. Basic terminology and history from both psychology and political science are covered in the course in order to allow students to analyze critical events pertinent to diversity in U.S. society.

The course is presently team taught by two professors, one from the Political Science department and one from the Psychology department, at the State University of New York College at Oswego. The college is located in a rural setting in upstate New York but draws both traditional and non-traditional students from all areas of the state of New York, surrounding states and from several foreign countries.

Students in the course are given an overview of political and psychological aspects of diversity in the beginning of the semester. A series of group speakers are then included to expose students to key issues in diversity. For the collaborative part of the course, students are required to participate on a group project that will be presented to the class orally and are given class time to interact with the group in designing the presentations. Students self-select a topic area on diversity from a list provided on the syllabus and this self-selection forms the membership of the groups. Topic areas include racism, sexism, affirmative action, sexual harassment, criminal justice, domestic violence, etc. Group size is limited to 6 to 8 students. Peer teaching with the use of teaching assistants and faculty collaboration are also utilized during the class in helping the groups develop their presentations.

Additionally, as a part of the course, students are voluntarily asked to participate in ongoing research on multicultural experience. The purpose of the research is to determine the impact of a human diversity course on student's willingness to engage in multicultural experience outside of class. It was thought that students' willingness to engage in multicultural experiences would reflect prejudice reduction.

This paper will provide a comparison of two data sets. The first data collection was in 1993 when the course was an elective and the second data collection was from 1997 when the course was required for human diversity general education credit. Mean scores from both the historical and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

contemporary scales of a modified version of the Multicultural Experience Inventory (MEI) by Ramirez, 1991 were used as the dependent measures in this study

Method

Students enrolled in a Human Diversity Course titled, "Race and Gender in U S Society: Political and Psychological Considerations", were administered an adaptation of the Multicultural Experience Inventory (Ramirez, 1991) to assess historical and present diversity experiences. Inventories were completed on the first day of class and on the last day of class.

Students were not aware of hypotheses for the study, which included the following: Large class instruction utilizing collaborative and experiential teaching methods would increase students willingness to engage in human diversity experiences. Secondly, student group projects that required peer teaching, peer grading and peer feedback would increase students cooperation even in diverse groups. Lastly, overall measures of prejudice would show a reduction in prejudice based on exposure to the methods of instruction used in the class.

Results of the present study were compared to data from four years ago when this teaching method and associated pre-post student evaluation was first conducted on a smaller sample (smaller class size) to determine if the previous studies' results can be replicated (Wolford and Clemo, 1993). The difference, besides time span of four years and the present studies' larger class size is that now the human diversity course is required whereas four years ago it was optional.

The first data set, 1993 sample, included 66 undergraduates enrolled in Race and Gender in U S Society: Political and Psychological Considerations who volunteered to participate in this study in 1993. Subjects' age and gender was as follows: Females comprised 80% (N=53) of the sample whereas males made up 18 % (N=12), and 1.5% was gender unknown (N= 1). The mean age of females was 25.5 and the mean age of males was 21.1. Subject ethnicity was 88% Anglo American (N = 59), 5% were African American (N = 3), 2% were Native American (N = 1), 0% were Asian American (N = 0) and 5% were Latino/Hispanic American (N = 3).

The second data set, 1997 sample, included 75 undergraduates enrolled in the same course as above who volunteered to participate in the study in 1997 (four years after the original data set was collected). There were originally 80 subjects but five inventories could not be scored due to incomplete information and were therefore eliminated from the data set. Subject age and gender was as follows: Females comprised 69% (N = 52) of the sample and males made up 31% (N = 23) of the sample. Mean age for females was 20.36 years and mean age for males was 21.2. Subject ethnicity was 88% Anglo-American (N = 66), 4% African-American (N = 3), 1% Native-American (N = 1), 5% Asian-American (N = 4) , and 1% Latino/Hispanic-American (N=1).

Instruments

The Multicultural Experience Inventory (MEI) was modified to eliminate specific identifying information. This instrument is a paper and pencil survey consisting of both demographic information (e.g. gender, ethnicity of self and parents) as well as a series of multiple choice questions regarding multicultural experiences (extent of outside reference group contact) in the past (8 historical items) and in the present (9 contemporary items) and (3 contemporary paired items). Responses include the following options: All Hispanic, or all African American, all Anglo or all Asian, Mostly Hispanic, or African American, or Anglo, or Asian, Hispanic, or African American or Asian and Anglo about equal, Mostly Anglo, All Anglo, or Other. Items are scored 3,2,or 1, higher scores are based on more multicultural contact. (Appendix A)

Group project instructions and guidelines included the following. Evaluation forms were used to

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

determine both faculty and peer grades of each presenter (75 points for the presentation of which 25 pts were from peer grades on groups participation and 50 points were from the average of the instructors grades for the presentation. (See Appendix B). Handouts with instructions covering specific guidelines for expectations for the presentations were also used to structure the format of the presentations (See Appendix C).

One page reaction papers were used as a qualitative assessment of student's reaction to attending diversity events on campus or in the community.

Procedure

Students were given informed consent forms with a brief description of the general nature of the project. Students were not aware of the central hypothesis or final purpose of the study. All students who were willing to participate, completed the modified MEI on the first day of class. At the end of the semester, 58 students completed the second MEI (post-test) in 1993 and 72 students completed the survey in 1997.

Results

Results of quantitative analysis of MEI Contemporary scores showed significant differences between pre-test means and post-test means, ($F = 7.952$, d.f. = 121, $p < .05$) for the 1993 sample only. There were no significant differences between pre-test and post-test means for the 1997 sample (Overall X = 1.75 Pre vs. Overall X = 1.77 Post, F = N.S.). A one-tailed t-test of the pre-post MEI Contemporary scores was significant in the direction of a positive change toward increased participation in multicultural activity (not course related) only in the 1993 sample, $t = 2.50$, d.f. = 121, $p < .05$.

Discussion

Results vary between the 1993 and 1997 sample. The 1993 sample evidenced significant change in the direction of increasing multicultural experience participation. One possible difference is that students in 1993, were taking the course as an elective and students in 1997 were taking the course as a requirement. This could have contributed to the students in the 1993 sample being more open to the changes they evidence in increased multicultural activity participation. Another possible explanation is that as the sample size increases, less change is detected. One course may not be sufficient to effect positive change. A third explanation for the difference in the two samples is that students in the 1993 sample took the course during a semester that there was an extensive human diversity event series on campus and were exposed to more opportunity for diversity experience than those students in the 1997 sample.

At SUNY Oswego, we have increased the human diversity requirement to two courses. Future research may focus on change scores (pre-post) on students first after one diversity course in completed and then again when the second course is completed.

References

Baird, B. N. (1991). In-class poster sessions. Teaching of Psychology, 18, 27-29.

Chrisler, J. D. (1990). Novels as case-study materials for psychology students. Teaching of Psychology, 17, 55-57.

Dettmer, P. (1986). Characteristics and needs of adult learners in gifted in service and staff development. Gifted Child Quarterly, 30, 131-134.

Dunn, D. S., and Toedter, L. J. (1991). The collaborative honors project in psychology: Enhancing student and faculty development. Teaching of Psychology, 18, 178-180.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Goldstein, G.S. (1993). Using a group workshop to encourage collaborative learning in an undergraduate counseling course. Teaching of Psychology, 20, 108-110.

Hall, K. (1995). Learning modes: An investigation of perceptions in five Kent classrooms. Educational Research, 30, 21-31.

Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, F.P. (1991). Joining together: Group theory and group skills. (4th Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Jolley, J. M., & Mitchell, M. L. (1990). Two psychologists' experiences with journals. Teaching of Psychology, 17, 40-41.

Ramirez III, M. (1991). Psychotherapy and Counseling with Minorities: A Cognitive Approach to Individual and Cultural Differences. Pergamon Press, Inc., New York, NY.

Riding, R. J., & Powell, S.D. (1993). Thinking and education. Educational Psychology, 13, 217-227.

Smith, B.L., & MacGregor, J.T. (1992). What is collaborative learning? In A.S. Goodsell, M.R. Maher, V. Tinto, B. L. Smithe, and J. MacGregor (Eds.), Collaborative Learning: A Sourcebook for higher education (p. 9-22).

Tinto, V., Russo, P., & Kadel, S. (1994). Constructing educational communities: Increasing retention in challenging circumstances. Community College Journal, 67(4), 26-30.

Wolford, K. & Clemo, L. (1993). Multicultural Experience Assessment in College Undergraduates in a Human Diversity Course: A Pre-Post Design. Paper presented at the Eastern Psychological Association Conference held in April in Washington, D.C.

Appendix A

MEI Part I

1 Gender _____

2 Age _____

3 Please indicate the ethnic background of the following persons (check where applicable)

	Yourself	Father	Mother
Hispanic			
African-American			
Anglo/White			
Asian-American			
Native-American			
Other (specify)			

4 The ethnic composition of the neighborhood in which I now live is

___a All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d Mostly Anglo
___e All Anglo
___f Other (Write in response for all other categories that you check)

5 At present, my close friends are

___a All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d Mostly Anglo
___e All Anglo
___f Other

6. In high school, my close friends were
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

7. The ethnic background of the people I have dated is
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

8. The people with whom I have established close and meaningful relationships have been
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

9. When I am with my friends, I usually attend functions where people are
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

10. My childhood friends who visited in my home and related with my parents were
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

11. My close friends at college are
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

12. I enjoy going to gatherings at which the people are
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

13. The people who have most influenced me in my education have been
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

14. When I study with others, I usually study with
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

15. In the jobs I have had, my close friends have been
___a. All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b. Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c. Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d. Mostly Anglo
___e. All Anglo
___f. Other

16 When I am involved in group discussions where I am expected to participate, I prefer a group made up of

___a All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d Mostly Anglo
___e All Anglo
___f Other

17 The ethnic affiliation of the religious officials I have known in my life have been

___a All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d Mostly Anglo
___e All Anglo
___f Other

18 The teachers and or counselors with whom I have had the closest relationships have been

___a All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d Mostly Anglo
___e All Anglo
___f Other

19 When I discuss personal problems or issues, I discuss them with

___a All Hispanic,or all African-American or all Asian
___b Mostly Hispanic,or African-American or Asian
___c Hispanic,or African-American or Asian and Anglo about equal
___d Mostly Anglo
___e All Anglo
___f Other

20 When I write poetry or personal material, I write in

___a Spanish or a Non-English language only
___b Mostly Spanish or Non-English language
___c Spanish or Non-English and English about equal
___d Mostly English
___e English only

Part B

21. I attend functions which are primarily Anglo in nature
___a Extensively
___b Frequently
___c Occasionally
___d Seldom
___e Never

22 I attend functions which are primarily Non Anglo in nature
___a Extensively
___b Frequently
___c Occasionally
___d Seldom
___e Never

23 I visit the home of Anglos (not relatives)
___a Extensively
___b Frequently
___c Occasionally
___d Seldom
___e Never

24 I invite Anglos to my home (not relatives)
___a Extensively
___b Frequently
___c Occasionally
___d Seldom
___e Never

25 I visit the home of Hispanics, African-Americans, Asians or other Non Anglos
___a Extensively
___b Frequently
___c Occasionally
___d Seldom
___e Never

26 I invite Hispanics, African-Americans, Asians or other Non Anglos (not relatives) to my home
___a Extensively
___b Frequently
___c Occasionally
___d Seldom
___e Never

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B

Presentation Guidelines Pol/Psy 120

A maximum of 75 points will be earned for each student's presentation:

25 points - Presentation Style. Good eye contact. Speaking voice loud enough and paced so students can follow presentation and take notes. Appropriate dress for presenters.

25 points - Content. Speaker gives class overview of what topic will be covered. Speaker then covers that topic in a clear, understandable fashion.

25 points - Group participation. Each student will be given a Cooperation and participation grade by every other Student in the group. The average of all those grades will become the group participation grade. This grade is to make sure all group members help plan the presentation. Scores range from 0 = no participation to 25 = excellent participation.

Lastly, each student will turn in a list of references that they used for their part of the presentation. No other written report is required.

Appendix C

Pol 120/Pay 120
Group Assessment Form

Please rate your fellow group members based of the following criteria:

Name _____

1. Creative Thinking and Innovative Ideas:		1	2	3	4
5					
2. Research and Substantive Input:		1	2	3	4
5					
3. Cooperation and Willingness to Help:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Time spent organizing and practicing:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall contribution to project:	1	2	3	4	5

Name_____ _

1. Creative Thinking and Innovative Ideas:		1	2	3	4
5					
2. Research and Substantive Input:		1	2	3	4
5					
3. Cooperation and Willingness to Help:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Time spent organizing and practicing:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall contribution to project:	1	2	3	4	5

Name_____

1. Creative Thinking and Innovative Ideas:		1	2	3	4
5					
2. Research and Substantive Input:		1	2	3	4
5					
3. Cooperation and Willingness to Help:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Time spent organizing and practicing:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall contribution to project:	1	2	3	4	5

Name_____

1. Creative Thinking and Innovative Ideas:		1	2	3	4
5					
2. Research and Substantive Input:		1	2	3	4
5					
3. Cooperation and Willingness to Help:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Time spent organizing and practicing:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall contribution to project:	1	2	3	4	5

Name_____

1. Creative Thinking and Innovative Ideas:	1	2	3	4
5				
2. Research and Substantive Input:	1	2	3	4
5				

3. Cooperation and Willingness to Help:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Time spent organizing and practicing:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall contribution to project:	1	2	3	4	5

Name_____

1. Creative Thinking and Innovative Ideas:		1	2	3	4
5					
2. Research and Substantive Input:		1	2	3	4
5					
3. Cooperation and Willingness to Help:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Time spent organizing and practicing:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall contribution to project:	1	2	3	4	5